Dulwich College Beijing
Dealing with Concerns and Handling Complaints

Introduction

It is important to clarify at the outset that in Dulwich College Beijing, we see parents as partners and we consider it essential that we work together to support each student’s education and development. Staff in our College have the same hopes and ambitions for students as parents.

However, it is inevitable that sometimes parents and students will be dissatisfied. When this happens, it is our aim to ensure that concerns and complaints are handled sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as quickly as possible.

We need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. Parents and students should never feel—or be made to feel—that a complaint, made in a reasonable and appropriate way, will be taken grudgingly or will reflect adversely on the student or his/her opportunities at school. We will investigate and try to resolve every complaint in a positive manner and will treat every complaint as an opportunity:

• to put right any matter which may have gone wrong
• to review our systems and procedures in the light of the relevant circumstances.

We recognise that a complaint which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment, damaging to relationships and also to our internal culture.

General Principles

• Students are at the centre of all our concerns—their needs come first.
• We want the best possible outcome for them.
• Give and expect both courtesy and consideration.
• The views of everyone concerned should be heard and valued.
• All concerned have rights—students, parents and staff.
• Confidentiality should be respected.
• Communication is the key to solving disputes and disagreements.

Sharing Concerns

The key to ensuring that students are happy, safe, achieving and successful is open communication—between school, students and parents. As a college, we commit to ensuring that parents are kept fully informed of general school information and specific matters relating to their own children in areas such as academic progress, curriculum, pastoral care, discipline, assessment and social development. In return, it is vital that students and parents indicate as early as possible when they start to feel concerned about anything. At this stage, we would not consider this to be a ‘complaint’ or even a ‘formal concern,’ but simply sharing thoughts, views and reactions to whatever is troubling you. If we know something is bothering you, we can attempt to do something about it.
There are many ways to share early concerns, such as:

- speaking directly to the class teacher, form tutor or subject teacher
- sharing the problem with the school counsellor, Mr Tom Gagne
- raising the matter with a promoted member of staff (maybe a year coordinator or subject leader)
- chatting with a head of year.

Very often, this can be enough to sort out the problem. Speak to someone!

Concerns and Complaints

If parents have a concern, they should:

- raise the concern verbally or by email with the member of staff or line manager (or the person organising the event/activity) as soon as possible
- explain the nature of the concern
- allow the College time to respond, especially as we may be unaware of the problem.

When does the concern become a complaint?

- When earlier and/or informal requests for support have failed to resolve the matter.
- When there is serious dissatisfaction that cannot be resolved in an informal way.
- When a concern is strong enough to require the use of formal procedure.

More Serious Concerns

If parents are unable to resolve matters using informal approaches, it will be necessary to take things further.

In the first instance, you should seek an appointment with the appropriate person in school. If you have tried, unsuccessfully, to resolve the matter informally with your child’s teacher, you should make an appointment to meet with:

- year coordinator or deputy head in early years and junior school
- head of year, subject leader or a deputy head in senior school.

For more serious concerns, you should ask for an appointment with the appropriate head of school:

- Mrs Kate Beith for early years
- Miss Ruth Grant for junior school
- Mr Christopher Woolf for senior school.

Should you remain dissatisfied at this stage, or feel at the outset that the matter is of a particularly serious nature, you should arrange an appointment with the Headmaster, Mr Neal McGowan.

It is completely acceptable and appropriate for a parent to bring a supporter, friend or advocate to a meeting, either simply to give reassurance or, if necessary, to help with language barriers and/or translation.
Written Complaints

It is important to make the distinction between sharing a concern in writing/email and making a formal written complaint. Sharing concerns in writing/email should be directed as described above.

If a parent wishes to make a formal complaint, this should be submitted in writing or by email to the Headmaster (headmaster@dulwich-beijing.cn). A formal complaint in writing will be acknowledged by email within 24 hours of its receipt or within three working days if in writing. The acknowledgement will state the action being taken to investigate the complaint and the likely timescale.

It may be that the Headmaster asks another member of staff to investigate the complaint on his behalf. In such cases, the investigating officer may be in communication with the parent involved, as well as the Headmaster, if appropriate.

It is our aim to resolve written complaints quickly. Other than for complex or extremely serious complaints, we would expect to provide parents with a written response to formal complaints within three working weeks, stating any action which has been taken, or stating that no further action will be taken, and giving reasons for this response.

Unreasonable or Abusive Complainants

Most parents raise complaints in a reasonable way. However, this may not always be the case. Some people may become unreasonable when they repeatedly or obsessively pursue an outcome which is inappropriate or unrealistic.

If a person pursues a complaint in this way, the College may take one of the following courses of action as appropriate.

- Write to the person, reiterating that the matter is concluded and no further correspondence should be expected in relation to the issue raised.
- If the correspondence continues, that it will be read and noted but will receive no further acknowledgement.
- Provide a short response referring to previous documents that have already addressed the issues raised.
- Refer the matter to Dulwich College Management International.

Verbal aggression is rare, but it can be intimidating and unacceptable. Everyone should expect to be treated courteously. The College will not accept or tolerate threatening behaviour towards staff, and will take appropriate action if required.
Anonymous Complaints

The College does not respond to anonymous complaints.

Taking Complaints Further

Although it is hoped that we would never reach this stage, if parents remained dissatisfied after taking their complaint to the Headmaster, they should contact the Director of Schools for Dulwich College Management International (DCMI). Contact details can be obtained from the Headmaster’s PA.

It should be stressed, however, that it is inappropriate and unreasonable to take complaints directly to DCMI without having first alerted the school and given them the opportunity to resolve matters. The first question you will be asked by DCMI is, “Have you raised this with the Headmaster?”

Monitoring Complaints

The College will monitor all complaints made in writing in an attempt to review and evaluate our policies and procedures. Summary information relating to complaints will be reported by the Headmaster at each meeting of the Board of Management and the Board of Trustees.

The Headmaster’s PA will keep the complaints log.

Summary of Whom to Speak to

Please note that for routine enquiries and exchanges of information, there is a range of people in the College who have responsibility for a range of different areas, who will be able to help you if you need information. The contacts below are where you take concerns and complaints.

- Routine matters relating to classwork and homework: class teacher
- Concerns about student behaviour: class teacher, form tutor, year coordinator (early years & junior school), head of year (senior school) or school counsellor
- Quality of teaching: heads of individual schools (early years, Junior and Senior)
- Programmes of work/curriculum content: year coordinators (early years & junior school or subject leaders (senior school)
- Personal, social, emotional, health and well-being: class teacher (early years & junior school), form tutor, head of year or deputy head—pastoral (senior school), school counsellor
- Enrolment: Head of External Relations
- School fees: Head of Business Administration
- Activities, trips, events and sport: heads of individual schools
- Child protection or safeguarding issues: heads of individual schools
- Overall College policy: Headmaster
- Leadership concerns: Headmaster
- Appeal of permanent exclusion of students from the College: Chair of Board of Trustees (via Headmaster’s PA)—see exclusion policy
- Allegations against members of staff: Headmaster
- Headmaster: DCMI
Key Contacts

- Headmaster: Mr Neal McGowan
- Head of Early Years: Mrs Kate Beith
- Head of Junior School: Miss Ruth Grant
- Head of Senior School: Mr Christopher Woolf
- Head of External Affairs: Ms Suzi Roberts
- Head of Business Administration: Ms Cynthia Maclean

- Director of Admissions: Mrs Choon Eichman
- Headmaster’s PA: Miss Nina Zhou

- Deputy Head Early Years: Miss Karen White
- Deputy Head Junior School: Mr Sean Jamieson
- Deputy Head (Curriculum) Senior School: Mr Christopher Woolf
- Deputy Head (Pastoral) Senior School: Mr Christopher Lynn

For details of other leaders and coordinators, please contact the Headmaster’s PA.

Contact Details

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<th>Main Campus</th>
<th>Early Years/KS1</th>
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<td>Legend Garden Campus</td>
<td>Beijing Riviera Campus</td>
<td>River Garden Villas</td>
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<tr>
<td>89 Capital Airport Road</td>
<td>1 Xiang Jiang Bei Lu</td>
<td>Hou Sha Yu Bai Xin Zhuang</td>
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<td>Shunyi District</td>
<td>Jing Shun Lu</td>
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<td>Beijing 101300</td>
<td>Chaoyang District</td>
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Tel: 86-10-6454-9000  Tel: 86-10-8450-7676  Tel: 86-10-8046-5132
Fax: 86-10-6454-9001  Fax: 86-10-8450-7575  Fax: 86-10-8046-1994

www.dulwich-beijing.cn
headmaster@dulwich-beijing.cn

Neal McGowan
Headmaster
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